2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

(*b*) Garden of last year to be dug up for ground-nuts or other crop = 2 weeks—during August–October. 221 461

(*c*) Garden of three years ago to be burnt and prepared for third-year millet = 1 week—during August–October. 512

(*d*) Garden of four years ago to be dug into mounds for beans or other crops = 2 weeks—during October–January.

Total = 13 weeks as a bare minimum, of which 8 can only be done by male labour.

In the village beds the labour expended can be roughly estimated as follows:

(*e*) Digging of new village beds = 2 weeks—usually during December–February.

(*f*) Complete rehoeing of old beds = 3 weeks—usually during December–February.

Or light hoeing of old beds = 1 week—usually during September–February.

(*g*) Burning, weeding, &c. = 1 week—usually during September–October.

Total = 4–6 weeks.

The total time spent both in the main gardens and on the village beds could thus be reckoned as a minimum period of 17–19 weeks, of which 8 weeks—4 during the dry season and 4 during the wet—can only be done by men. Probably, however, under ordinary village conditions and combining other tasks such as house-building, fishing, &c., the Bemba usually take 4–5 weeks longer to produce the same results, making a total of 5–6 months' work.

How is the Bemba to find this amount of time under modern conditions of migratory labour? He can clearly not produce the optimum results from the soil, but merely the minimum amount of food which will keep his family from destitution. 221 512

From the agricultural point of view the difficulty of the Northern Rhodesia labour situation is the length of time for which the men go to the mines and their lack of facilities for getting back to their villages. Recruiting ceased in the area in 1930, and the men mostly make their way to the mines (300–500 miles) on foot, or by bicycle. The Rand mineworker signs up for an eleven months' contract usually, with his return passage home automatically deducted from 221 512 464

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

221 512 464 his wages. But the Bemba has either to pay 35*s.* for a lorry passage home or he must bicycle or walk. The first is considered a prohibitive passage, except for the better-off native, and the second is only done when a man is really sick of the town and feels he must get home—say after two or three years or even longer. He cannot reasonably return every year for the three months' garden labour which we have reckoned as necessary with the present method of cultivation. However, it can be seen from the table on p. 315 that, if a man spent two years at home, he could make millet gardens and fence them in successive years. He could then spend two years at the mines, leaving his wife to plant the third-year millet. She would thus have some millet every year if her husband had facilities for returning again in the fourth year, but this is obviously only one of the minimum solutions described above. For an improved food-supply an alternative method to tree-cutting or greater ease of transport to and from the mines are required.

The Will to Work.

461 At the opening of this book I described Bemba diet as inadequate and variable, and their methods of gardening as primitive compared to those of their neighbours. In some of the succeeding chapters I have tried to account for the shortage in their annual and daily food-supply by describing the people's difficulties in preparing and producing different foodstuffs, or in their methods of handling, distributing, and storing them. We have still to ask one final question, and its answer is to be found scattered here and there throughout the book. Put crudely, it is the query which springs naturally to the mind of most Europeans living in this area, viz. 'If the Bemba go short of food so often, why don't they work [191] a good bit harder and drink less beer?' Successive Government reports describe this tribe as 'poor agriculturists' or 'incorrigibly lazy',[1] and the traveller, gazing at ill-weeded gardens and broken-down fences, cannot resist the same type of comment. The average working day of a man has been estimated as only four hours, even though the women are undoubtedly overworked at certain seasons of the year, and I have given a good many facts to show

[1] e.g. the Government Report for Native Affairs, 1936, p. 47. 'Natives in this Province generally speaking strike one as singularly unenterprising and indeed downright lazy about the growing of foodstuffs.'

601 [605] sister's child or the mother's brother's child. Cross-cousin marriage is, as has been said, the preferential marriage, and joking relationships exist between a man and his female cross-cousins on either side.

In the first ascending generation, a man uses the term *tata* for his own father, his father's brothers, real and classificatory, and the husband of a woman whom he calls mother. He uses the term *mayo* for his own mother and her sisters, real or classificatory. He distinguishes his father's sister by a special term, *mayo senge*, from his mother's sisters and the mother's brother by a separate term, *yama*, from his father's brother. In the first descending generation, there is a common term, *mwana*, used for both sexes, but a man calls the children of his sister by a special term, *mwipwa*, and a woman calls the children of her brother either *mwipwa* or *mwana senge*.

In the second ascending generation there is a common term, *shikulu*, for the paternal and maternal grandfathers, real or classificatory, and *mama* for grandmother. In the second ascending generation the same term, *mweshikulu*, is used for boys and girls, whether the children of daughters or the children of sons. The common term, *bukwe*, is used for spouses and members of the *lupwa*, although there is a special term for sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, *shifyala* or *najyala*. These terms are used reciprocally.

CHANGES IN MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY DUE TO EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

797 177 Changes in marriage and the family have resulted both from the teaching of Christian missions and also because of the absences of adult males, who leave home to earn the means wherewith to pay tax and buy European goods. Missionary teaching has, as in other areas, been directed against the practice of polygyny and divorce. Missionaries have also opposed the practice of giving young girls to their husbands before puberty. They have endeavoured also to eradicate the magical attitudes towards sex and fire, described in a later section - attitudes which form one of the sanctions of marriage morality. They have been largely successful in their attempt to prevent the celebration of girls' initiation ceremonies (*cisungu*).

797 177 585 Native marriage is recognised in this area. The British South Africa Company recognised the Native Customary Law from the start and administered it through district magistrates' courts with the aid of Bemba assessors. Simultaneously the Missions instituted various Christian ceremonials in which a restricted(1) form of traditional marriage ceremony was carried out. With the institution in 1929 of Native Courts of Law, all civil actions arising out of marriage were referable to them and not to a European Magistrate. An early missionary claim to regulate marriages was quashed in 1934. Native marriages may now be registered.

LABOUR MIGRATION

167 464 Although it is generally recognized that labour migration has been an

(1) Without initiation rites and full ceremonial, e.g. post-initiation intercourse.

increasingly potent cause of change in family structure and has affected many other institutions among the Bemba and other people in Northern Rhodesia, precise data in respect of migrants, their age, and tribal and territorial distribution are not available. Estimates prepared for the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Financial and Economic Position of Northern Rhodesia give the following average number of Northern Rhodesian African workers in European employment:-(1)

	In Northern Rhodesia	*Outside Northern Rhodesia*	*Total*
1927	43,314	36,873	80,187
1936	53,462	51,212	104,674

The Report points out that the figure of those employed outside Northern Rhodesia, i.e. in Southern Rhodesia, Tanganyika, the Rand and the Congo, is an under-estimate and that the actual number is probably considerably higher. As the total number of tax-paying males is estimated at 288,000, of whom not more than 170,000 are fit for hard manual labour, the high incidence of migrancy becomes self-evident.

The Report states that "it is certain that the local economic opportunities are insufficient and that money can for the large majority only be earned by going abroad."(2) While it is clear that there are other motives, such as love of adventure, or family tensions, underlying the decision to engage in migrant labour, economic pressure is the overriding cause. The actual incidence of migrancy varies widely, depending on local economic conditions; districts situated along the railway lines or, as in part of the Northern Province, where income can be obtained from fishing, having generally a smaller proportion of migrants.

The length of time the men are away from home probably varies considerably, and here again, precise data are lacking. The mines around Ndola and at Broken Hill are the largest single employers of migrant labour. In 1936 they employed 15,137, which is 28.3% of the total number of Native workers employed in the Territory.

The following figures for the whole of the labour intake of the Northern Rhodesian mines give some idea of the overall picture in 1937:-

Period of Absence	*Percentage*	*Number*
Up to 6 months	43.98	8,372
6 months - 2 years	28.02	5,332
2 - 3 years	11.71	2,230
Over 3 years	16.28	3,097

The estimates given by District Commissioners of the proportion of adult males normally absent from their homes show a considerable variation in different districts, ranging from 12% in Mkushi to 40-70% in Mporokoso. The following are the estimates of male absentees in the three Northern

(1) Except where otherwise stated, these and other figures are from Pim, 1938, pp.35, 36, 357.

(2) ibid., p.37.

167 Province districts in which the majority of the Bemba live:-(1)
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Kasama	50%
Chinsali	29%
Mpika	30%

Estimates for other districts containing some Bemba are:-

Abercorn	49%
Isoka	Not given
Mporokoso	40-70%
Luwingu	20%

It must be stressed that these estimates are not based on precise data. But despite the fact that the figures are only approximate, the general conclusion as to the large extent of migrancy is not in doubt.

In 1937 the three districts(2) in which the majority of Bemba live contributed 21.9% (1937 men) of all Northern Province labour (8,752) to the Copperbelt, and 11.3% of the total labour force employed on the Copperbelt (17,128 men). The contribution of all districts containing some Bemba(3) represented 46.5% (4,071 men) of all Northern Province labour and 23.8% of all labour.

167 Marriage and the family are affected by this high rate of migration
593 of marriageable males. As in other parts of Africa where this system of migratory labour is prevalent, the absence of the man naturally leads to a loosening of the marriage tie. Women left alone for three or four years contract other unions in their husbands' absence. The amount of land that can be put under cultivation is also reduced and the economic condition of the wife and children is inevitably worsened. There are, however, certain factors inherent in the matrilineal system which do not apply in the patrilineal areas to the east and south. Bemba society does not recognise a stable residential unit based on the kinship of its male members as do the patrilineal Ngoni to the east, and the absentee men have fewer permanent ties to bind them to a particular village at home and seem to have a less developed sense of allegiance to such villages. Moreover, the marriage contract in this area depends, as we have seen, on the giving of service to the father-in-law rather than the payment of money or goods. This service cannot be given when the young husband is at the mines, and a small monetary payment of about 10/- is given in lieu. The whole process

(1) *The Annual Report on African Affairs* for 1948 gives the following figures for that year for the three Bemba districts:-

Individual District	*% taxable males absent*	*% employed in Northern Rhodesia*	*% employed outside Northern Rhodesia*
Kasama	53.55	17.06	36.49
Chinsali	39.54	10.74	28.8
Mpika	28.62	3.9	24.72
Average	40.47	10.56	30.00

(2) Kasama, Chinsali, Mpika.
(3) Kasama, Chinsali, Mpika, Abercorn, Isoka, Mporokoso, Luwingu.